



# young, wild and free

nature, young people  
and the national  
parks

by hannah  
corsini

# INTRO



In this zine, I'm going to tell you some stories about young people and nature. All of these stories are real, kindly volunteered by the young people themselves: Ewurajoa, Kalli, Luke and Raheema. The main thing connecting these people is that they live in the West Midlands, where I also lived from 2019 - 2024.

The other young person is me. I'm going to tell you about my experiences at two national parks: the Pembrokeshire Coast and the Peak District. I went to these parks at very different times in my life.

I hope this zine will convince you that nature has a transformative power, and that this matters an awful lot to young people. Nature is vital to our mental health, and to sustaining a livable future. We need to protect landscapes, and ensure that those which are designated as protected remain that way.

Which leads me nicely onto the funders of this zine, Campaign for National Parks.





This zine is funded by Campaign for National Parks through a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. It is part of the 'New Perspectives' scheme, where young people share their experiences of the National Parks through a variety of media.



As well as the valuable work Campaign for National Parks do on protecting the ecology of national parks and fighting against their pollution, they work to improve inclusivity of the parks.

Only 6% of visitors to the National Parks are between 16 and 24 and there are clear institutional barriers to young people engaging in the national parks.

Through this zine, I hope to show that our experiences in nature and the National Parks **matter**.



Gwnaed yn bosibl gan

**Cronfa  
Treftadaeth**

Made possible with

**Heritage  
Fund**

# ME



In October 2021, after a traumatic end to a traumatic relationship, I ended up at Fort Dale, on the Pembrokeshire Coast.



It was a university trip.

I didn't want to be there. I didn't want to be anywhere.



But something about it restored me.

It's hard to be sad when you're by the sea.



me, in 2021.



Fort Dale,  
Pembrokeshire, 2021

Hard to overthink when you spend your days hiking through mud and surveying plants and animals.





On one of the days, we caught and marked crabs. We released them back into the sea and then re-captured them to estimate the total crab population.



Another day, we scaled the rocky shore to see how the types of species present changed with elevation.



The week was my first proper foray into practical ecology and I loved it (even the statistics part!).





And now, a few years later, I'm completing an MSc in Conservation Science at Imperial College London.

graduating from my BSc in 2022.  
(MSc pic pending!)



I'm not saying it solved my problems. My life was there waiting for me when I got back home.



But for a week, it was like everything wrong with it was on pause. Nature can have that effect.



A big part of it was coming out of successive lockdowns, where the only visible worlds were through a screen.







There's a common perception among older generations that younger people simply aren't interested in nature, or they'd rather spend all of their time on social media or playing video games than being outside.

The conversations I have had with young people illustrate that this often isn't true. And when it is, why is it that way?

Do we teach young people to value nature? Do we allow them time to spend in it? Can young people even afford to travel to places like national parks? All of these questions were touched on by the people I spoke to. Let's start with Ewurajoa.





# EWURAJOA

When they built Milton Keynes, they built it to be the city behind the trees. It's great when you're driving and the roads are overgrown with trees.

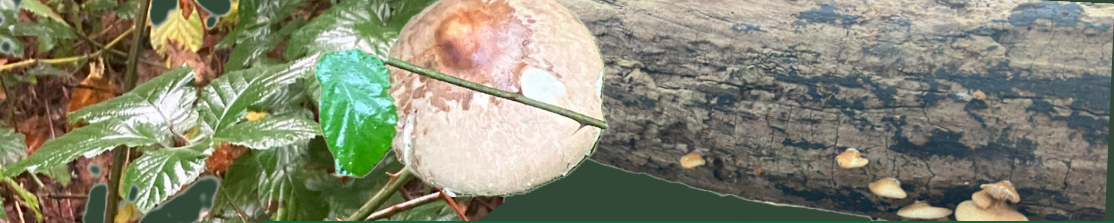
Me and my dad talk about it all the time, like how much of this CO<sub>2</sub> do you actually think is going into the air? Because there are so many trees here and they are humongous and they are getting *fed*.

I think that's good for nature, and I think it's good for people's mental health, and I also just think it's good for life, to have greenery around you - cleaner breathing areas, cleaner air, that sort of thing.

I don't necessarily have a strong connection to nature, but I think I have a strong *respect* for nature, which is not to say that truly do I ever want to go on a hike.







I do like going on walks. I do like having greenery around me. I do feel quite suffocated in an area where there isn't a lot of greenery. I don't think that I should have to walk more than 15 minutes to find a park



It's *egregious*, actually. When I lived in Canley, I was five minutes away from Prior Deram park. There were times when I was literally doing an assignment at like, 11pm - but because it's so close to me, because it's a community space, I would just go there in the middle of the night and I would actually feel safe.

But in Coventry...I can't just step outside and go to the park.




Because first of all, the park is like 20 minutes away, and secondly, the parks aren't really a place for community.

A lot of people grow up here. They move to London as well. And for me, that's been a big point of contention between me and my friends, because I am nervous about feeling too caged up.

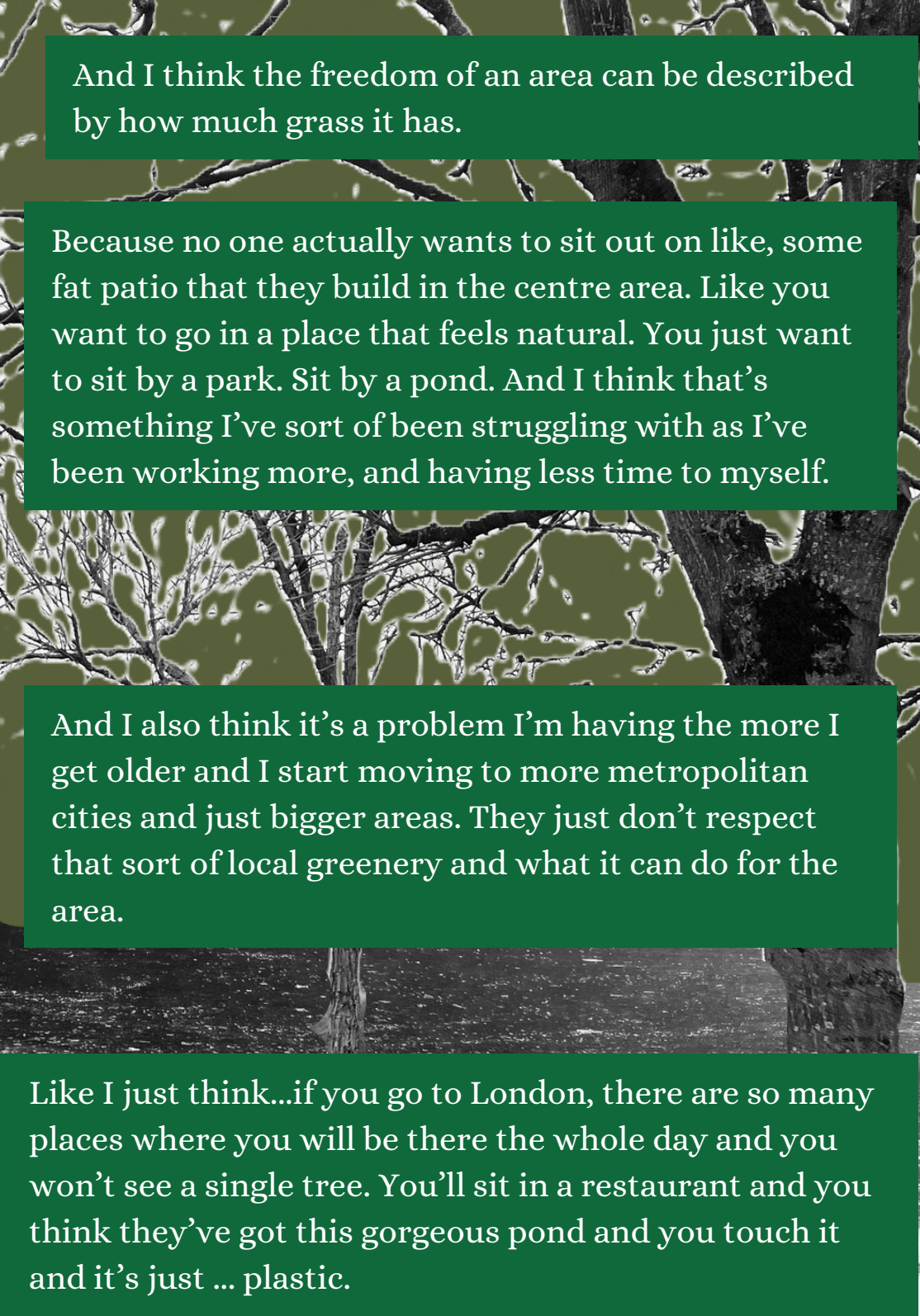
Like, in that sort of city landscape, where there's nary a tree.. a patch of grass... I just don't think I can live like that.

So, I guess in a sense I definitely do have a connection to nature.

A surreal image of a cityscape with a giant mushroom growing from a rooftop. The mushroom has a large, orange, ribbed cap and a thick, light-colored stem. It is positioned in the center of the frame, with its cap reaching towards the top of the image. The background consists of several tall, modern buildings with many windows, some of which are dark, suggesting they are empty. The sky is a solid, dark blue. In the foreground, at the bottom left, there is a pile of smaller, similar mushrooms growing from a dark, textured surface. The overall composition suggests a theme of nature growing in an urban environment.

I think my biggest issue as I get older and I start pursuing a career is that it drives me into areas that aren't as free, I guess.




The background of the entire page is a photograph of a park. In the foreground, there are several trees with bare, dark branches. In the middle ground, there is a body of water, likely a pond, surrounded by more trees and greenery. The sky is visible in the background, showing some clouds. The overall scene is a peaceful park setting.

And I think the freedom of an area can be described by how much grass it has.


Because no one actually wants to sit out on like, some fat patio that they build in the centre area. Like you want to go in a place that feels natural. You just want to sit by a park. Sit by a pond. And I think that's something I've sort of been struggling with as I've been working more, and having less time to myself.

And I also think it's a problem I'm having the more I get older and I start moving to more metropolitan cities and just bigger areas. They just don't respect that sort of local greenery and what it can do for the area.


Like I just think...if you go to London, there are so many places where you will be there the whole day and you won't see a single tree. You'll sit in a restaurant and you think they've got this gorgeous pond and you touch it and it's just ... plastic.



I don't really like going out in Coventry. I try to avoid the city centre as much as possible. In my first year, we went to dinner and there was this crazy stabbing, like right outside. I feel like ... maybe that's traumatic, but I don't feel safe in Coventry.




I can never just be outside and be chilling. Every bench that there is, it's in a pathway. It's in a place of movement, a place of obstruction. You go to the city centre and there's these benches there which are cool if you want to take a short break, but you don't actually feel relaxed, because it's not a slow-moving environment.




Whereas I feel like if there were more parks and they actually felt safe, and they had benches there, I would definitely go sit there.




But like, if you're sitting outside because - why not? - and there are people rushing around, there's like street performers and the police...it doesn't feel like a natural, comfortable environment. Part of the reason why I don't want to come here is because it's not welcoming, but part of the reason why it's not welcoming is because of the lack of greenery.






I think climate change made me very depressed. Especially at the time of COVID, where it was like, we were all locked up. It was like, the world is sick ...everyone is sick. Parks are sick. Animals are sick. We don't have enough animals. Animals are enslaved.

I feel like we waste a lot as well. And I feel like the environment is made to be recyclable. It's made to be that sort of cycle of life, energy pouring back into things. Even with fossils, the fact that they went back into the earth - the ground accepted them. Like who are you to take them and start burning them?



And it's like, you know, I can have my garden, and I can petition for parks and things, but it doesn't necessarily feel like it's doing anything. It's so haunting.



I also feel like in my heart of hearts that national parks aren't what they used to be...I just feel like in some cases they're not kept as well. I don't think we're doing enough. I think that's the crux of it. I just don't think we're doing enough.



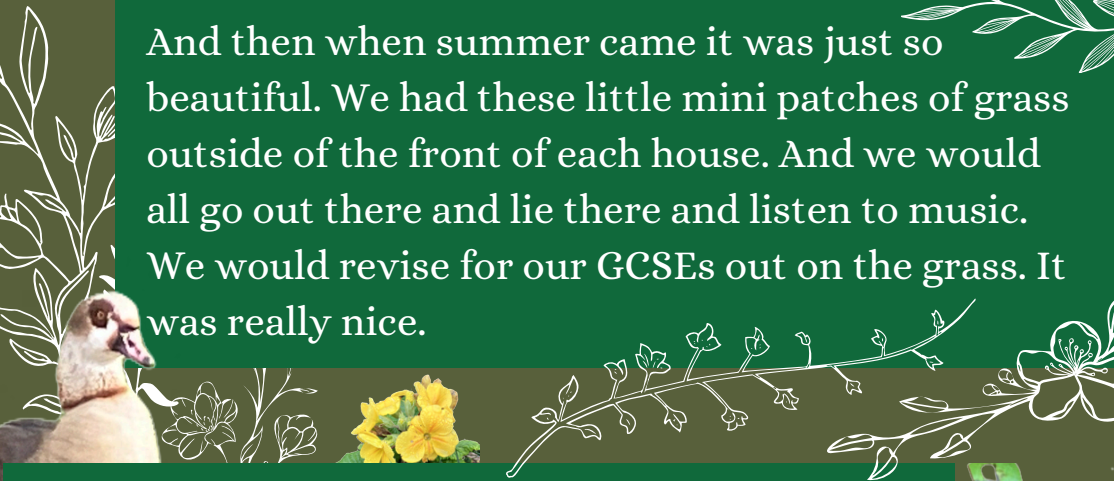
So I went to a boarding school for a couple of years, and so green spaces were such a huge part of that. Like, not being able to have freedom inside the house because there's 50 other girls... if you want to meet a cheeky crush, if you want to just hang out with friends, you would just go outside.



We had this massive expanse of land around us. All of these different fields and quads, grass quads and pond quads. If you were outside chilling with your friends, you'd be like let's go out for a walk.

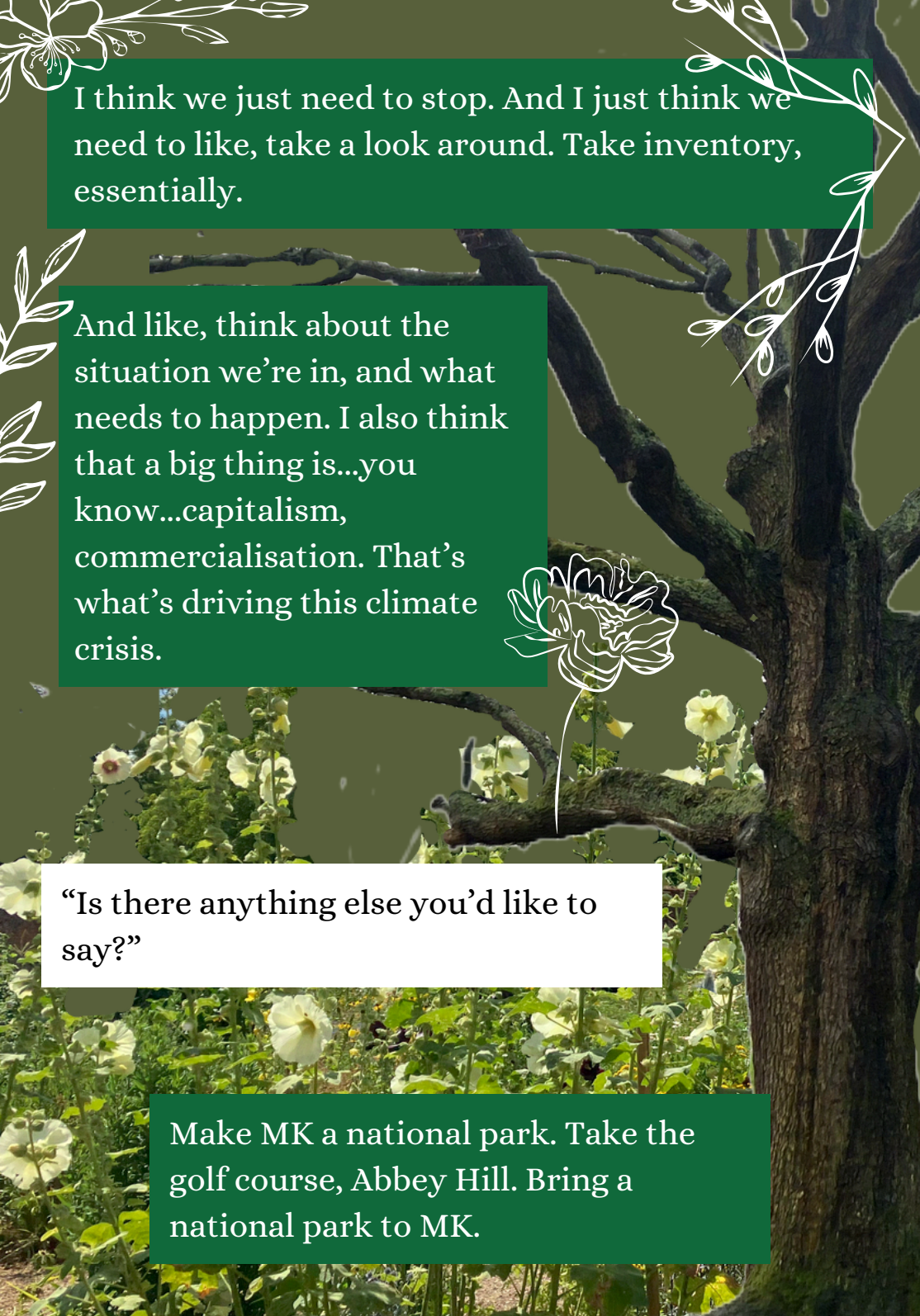
You'd go for a walk and you'd sit in the field, and there were loads of benches. We couldn't go out and go on dates on stuff, so someone would just ask you on a walk.

And then when summer came it was just so beautiful. We had these little mini patches of grass outside of the front of each house. And we would all go out there and lie there and listen to music. We would revise for our GCSEs out on the grass. It was really nice.



Growing up in high school...taking a nap on the grass...oh my God. Wearing a daisy crown that your friend made you while the sun is warming you up? Crazy.





I think we just need to stop. And I just think we need to like, take a look around. Take inventory, essentially.

And like, think about the situation we're in, and what needs to happen. I also think that a big thing is...you know...capitalism, commercialisation. That's what's driving this climate crisis.

“Is there anything else you'd like to say?”


Make MK a national park. Take the golf course, Abbey Hill. Bring a national park to MK.




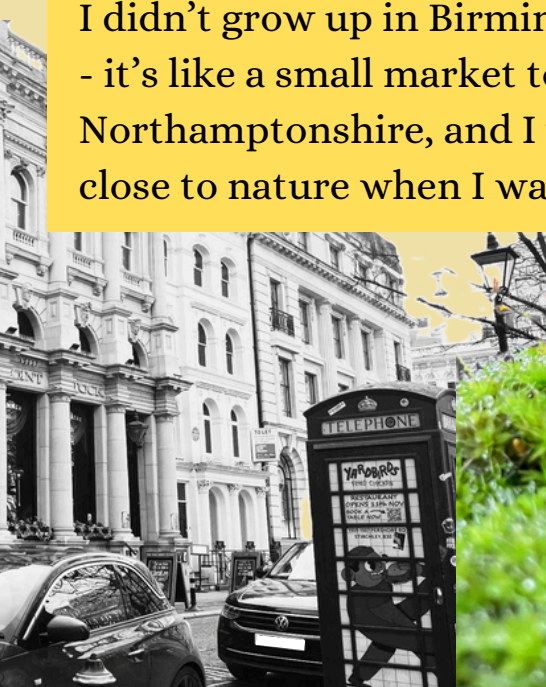
# KALLI

I'm Kalli, I'm 25 and I live in King's Heath, in South Birmingham.


I think there is a lot of nature where I am, like there's a few parks around here. There's Moseley park which is on the main road, and then there's Highbury park. My favourite is Highbury. Moseley Park is private, like you have to pay for membership every year, which is a bit weird. The money from the membership goes towards maintenance of the park, but it's still a bit off.



I didn't grow up in Birmingham, I grew up in Toast - it's like a small market town in Northamptonshire, and I wasn't ever really that close to nature when I was young.







I would say that I wasn't an outdoorsy person but as I've grown older, like moving to university cities like Nottingham and Coventry and then Birmingham, I guess I've met loads of people who are interested in nature, and that's made me interested in it.

In Birmingham, I like going to Gardening Club, which is once every Friday in Erdington. And it's a community plot which is funded by the National Lottery and other grantmakers.

And I harvested potatoes for the first time. That was really fun. Because I've never done it before, growing my own food. It tastes different when you've grown it. And it's so satisfying to work in nature, to use your hands and tools and get a bit muddy.



There's loads of urban nature and I think it needs to be looked after, maintained and conserved. Otherwise just the greenbelt areas would be protected - well, you know, "protected" in the basic sense - but then the urban areas would be forgotten. So I think it's important to think about both urban and rural areas.

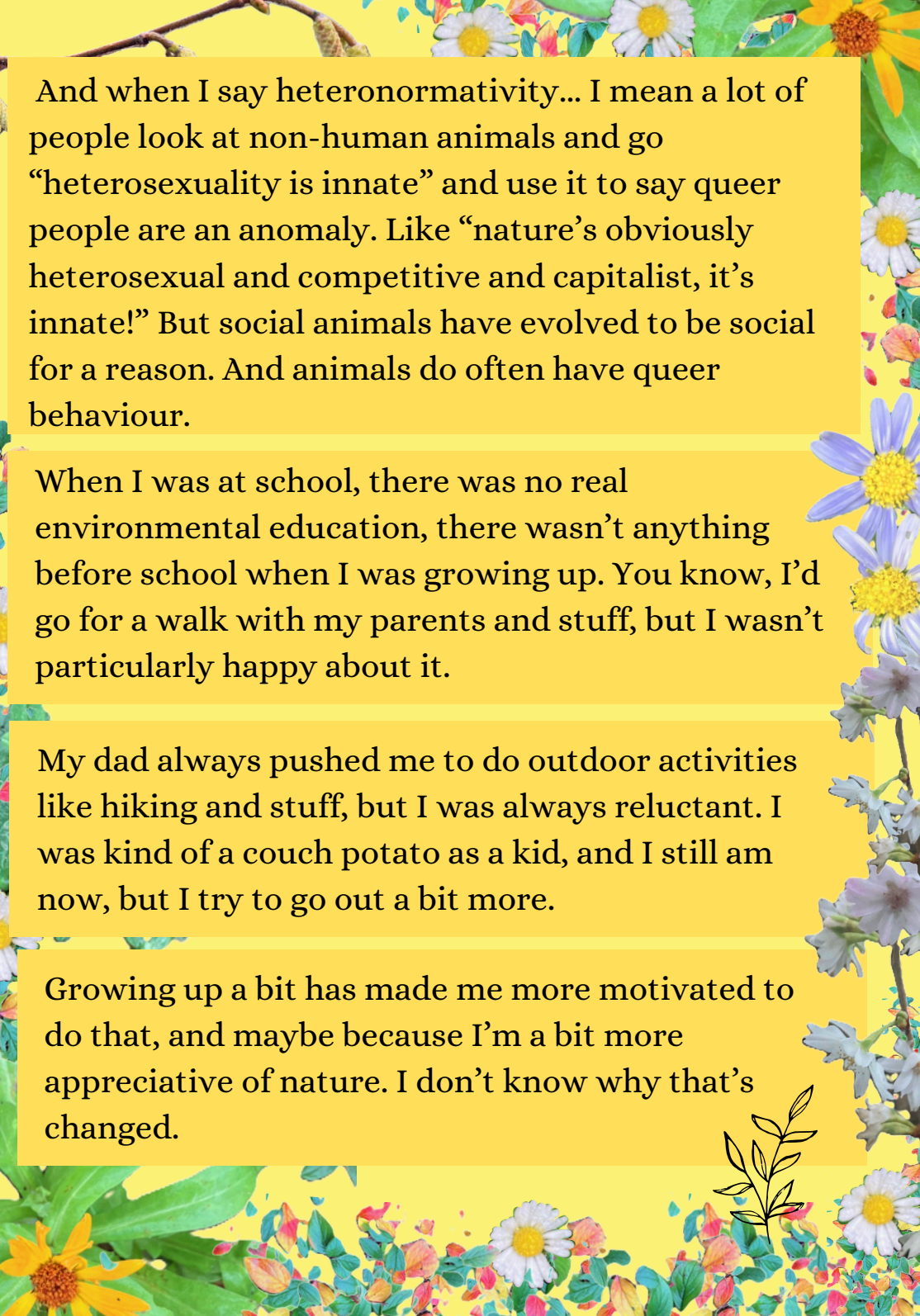
I think nature has been kind of constructed in a heteronormative, middle upper-class, white European kind of view. I feel like it's very manufactured. It's very manicured, which is why rewilding is good. I guess that's going back to what nature actually is. How we define it - it's a social construct. And how we define it is very limited and restrictive.



Like you know, the American ideal lawn - I think that's very human. It's an Americanisation of nature. Like we mow it religiously and we put up white picketed fences. There's no diversity. It's a very regimented view of nature. My landlord mows my lawn all the time. Next spring I'll probably message him and just say can we mow the lawn a bit less frequently.

I think people have to accept that we can't have perfect, predictable, controllable nature. It's a bit chaotic and random and not in a straight line.






And when I say heteronormativity... I mean a lot of people look at non-human animals and go “heterosexuality is innate” and use it to say queer people are an anomaly. Like “nature’s obviously heterosexual and competitive and capitalist, it’s innate!” But social animals have evolved to be social for a reason. And animals do often have queer behaviour.

When I was at school, there was no real environmental education, there wasn’t anything before school when I was growing up. You know, I’d go for a walk with my parents and stuff, but I wasn’t particularly happy about it.

My dad always pushed me to do outdoor activities like hiking and stuff, but I was always reluctant. I was kind of a couch potato as a kid, and I still am now, but I try to go out a bit more.

Growing up a bit has made me more motivated to do that, and maybe because I’m a bit more appreciative of nature. I don’t know why that’s changed.







Maybe, you know, looking back at where I lived, there was more access to nature, to non-urban, non-concrete places, but the nature there was a lot of monocultures and grass. Here there's allotments and parks which are more diverse in some ways.



But I think there's definitely inequality in cities based on who lives there. So the middle class areas often have a minimum disposable income to look after their areas.

There's a divide in the quality of the parks and that's nothing to do with the people. I think it's often to do with funding and maintenance - like paying for wardens, or people to look after the parks.

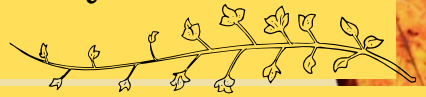


In the south of South Brum, it's really quite affluent and middle-class in comparison to like North Birmingham, places like Erdington and Aston. Those kinds of places, there are allotments and parks but I don't think they're considered as nice as the parks down here.

There's a long waiting list for most allotment sites across the UK, so there's not enough. I know they're gated and stuff, which is to protect them from being robbed, but it's a barrier like the waiting list.



Moseley Park is lovely, and they do festivals there, but the only way you get to see the park is to pay membership every year. It's like £70 per year. It could be a lot more, like £1000, but I don't want to waste money on that when I could buy food. So that's a barrier to nature.



Also, I don't drive. If you want to go somewhere like a National Park or a National Trust site, you know, you have to drive there and I don't drive, so that's kind of a barrier. And the trains to like smaller little villages or towns are probably closed now because of the cuts. So it's hard to get around by public transport and inconvenient as well. So I tend to stick to my parks in Birmingham, and then if they can, my friend might drive us all to the Peak District or something.



I wonder what young people and nature there ... like what their experience is, because it's probably different. You're probably more likely to drive there because you're probably pushed to drive, like you have to learn to drive. Most of the time, younger people drive in rural areas. Which is very expensive, to learn to drive.



So transport is definitely a major barrier. And if that was solved, a lot of barriers would go. Like it'd be so much easier to go to the Peak District or the Wye Valley because you could just get on a train and go.

I wish that there were more train stations in the little towns around it. Because Buxton has one, and there are others, but there should be more. And maybe, you know, wild camping would be nice. Like being able to camp where you want, like in Dartmoor.

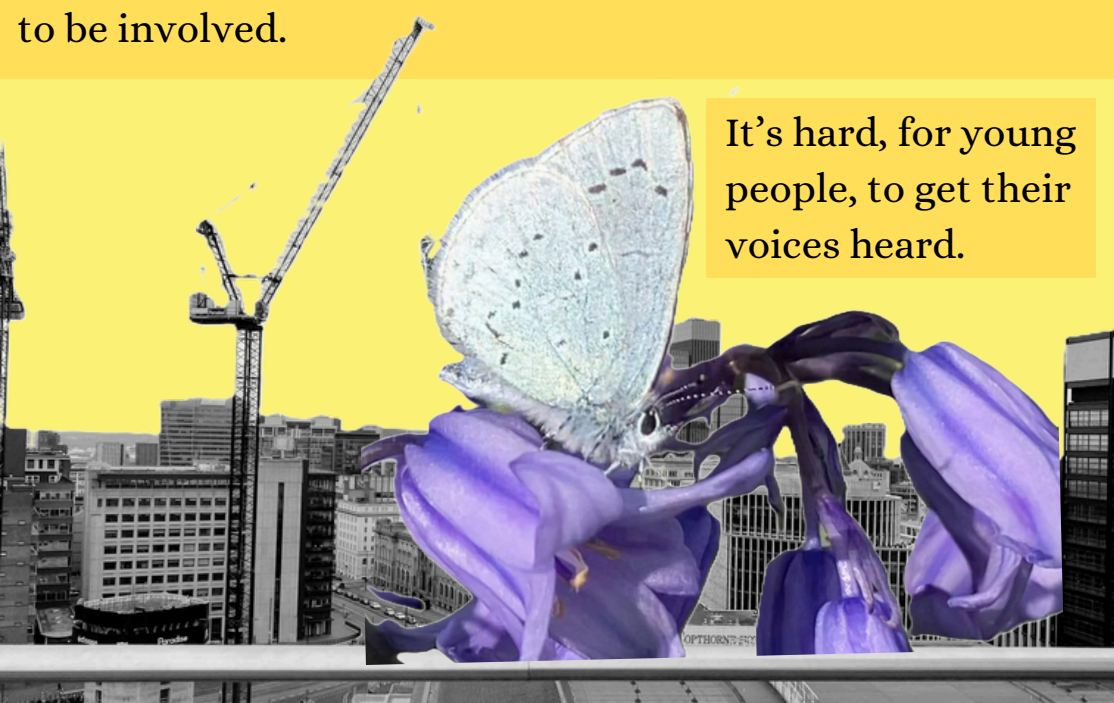
Maybe there should be more national parks. Like maybe there's other areas in the UK which haven't even been classified as areas of national beauty, or even like sites of scientific interest. Why don't they designate those? Because then it will make people look after them a bit more.





I think it's already a bit too late to do anything about the climate crisis. I think it's already past a tipping point. Even if we stopped producing any man-made gases and fumes and stuff, we'd still reach a tipping point in a decade or however long it takes for the feedback. We need to try and prevent it getting worse. I think community level - people are doing things to connect people back with nature, to help them appreciate it a bit more and become more conscious about it.

But in terms of the international level...there's not a lot going on. It's a lot of lip service. I think the community has to bear the burden of encouraging people to change how they behave and their attitudes. We have less money, we don't necessarily have the ability to do the job that governments should be doing. But obviously, we all need to be involved.



It's hard, for young people, to get their voices heard.

# LUKE




My name is Luke, I'm 23 and I'm a biologist, and a biophysicist specifically. I live in the outskirts of Banbury, in Oxfordshire, but I've previously lived kind of around the area as well as in Leicester and Oxford. And originally I'm from Dublin.

In my area, I would say there is a lot of greenery. You only have to go, really, about a mile out of the population centres and then you're in the actual wilderness.

It's a bit of a forest around here, and it's a nice mix of urban and suburban. I've been to the forest, not legally, but I have trespassed. I think there is something to be said for rambling in an area you're not supposed to be in. I think generally the attitude in the area is that people are quite proud of their right to ramble.

You can go to some places that are really, really remote, and you can encounter somebody else who's also there, and kind of look at each other like...neither of us are supposed to be here.




The background of the page is a collage of various nature-related images. In the top left, there is a piece of weathered, greyish-brown driftwood. To the right of the first text block, there are several mushrooms, including a large one with a reddish-brown cap and a smaller one with a white cap. In the bottom right, there is a cluster of bright red, tubular flowers. In the bottom left, there are white flowers with yellow centers. The text is overlaid on semi-transparent red rectangular boxes.

Usually I find myself out in the wilderness with my family, and I find that really peaceful. I do kind of feel a little more dominance, because I'm the only man who's travelling in the pack, and I feel responsible for my mum and my sister.

So if there's a car approaching or something, I'll be like "push in". I do sometimes go out alone, but mainly I'm around women. I always find myself having like, difficult conversations when I'm out of the house. Because you know ... depending on what your home life is like ... I have the kind of house where you can't - it's an interesting family dynamic, let's say that.

I mean, the fact that it's a wide open space with nobody around. You can kind of talk about things that are a secret, I guess. Or things that you would talk about in private. You can kind of do it in public, but not out in public. It's literally out in the open, but because of the remoteness, you can have sensitive conversations while you're walking down the street.







My mum's a gardener. I come from a very long line of gardeners and horticulturalists. So, like I grew up amazed by ... my mum's not terribly scientific or academic or anything, but she can point to a plant and tell you its Latin name. I grew up being amazed by that.

And if I have a potted plant in my house or my room, I like to know what it is. How you care for it, and if it produces flowers or fruits or whatever those are.

I think the attitudes between England and Ireland in terms of like nature, and national parks - that kind of thing is the same. I think there's still the respect there, but Ireland's a lot more kind of wild in nature. I think that possibly has to do with being a much smaller island, because if you think about it, proportionally a lot more of Ireland is coastal.



England's country houses and national parks and stuff are maybe a little bit more manicured.



I'll always come down on the side of Ireland in any debate. I don't know, I think in Ireland, the national parks and houses are mainly about the farms and the environment, whereas in England, it's more preoccupied with the history of the houses. Like who lived there, what streets were assigned there. In Ireland, it's a little bit more about the location.

Irish history is about the country. A country...it's about shores. Irish history was British history until up about 100 years ago. They pay more attention to what is far-away in Ireland.



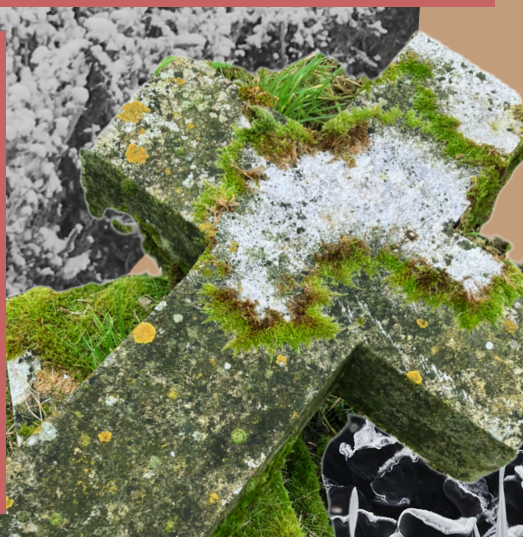
In primary school, we were lucky enough that we had access to a big woodland. Pretty much, it was just solid woodland. So we would occasionally get taken into the forest. And then we built forts.

Looking back I don't think there was any academic purpose in it other than just getting used to what's outside. There weren't always lessons.

It was more like, we're going out in the forest! We're going to look for different trees! Or leaves or something...we're going to bring them back inside and make collages with them. There weren't any teachers who really did anything more than that.

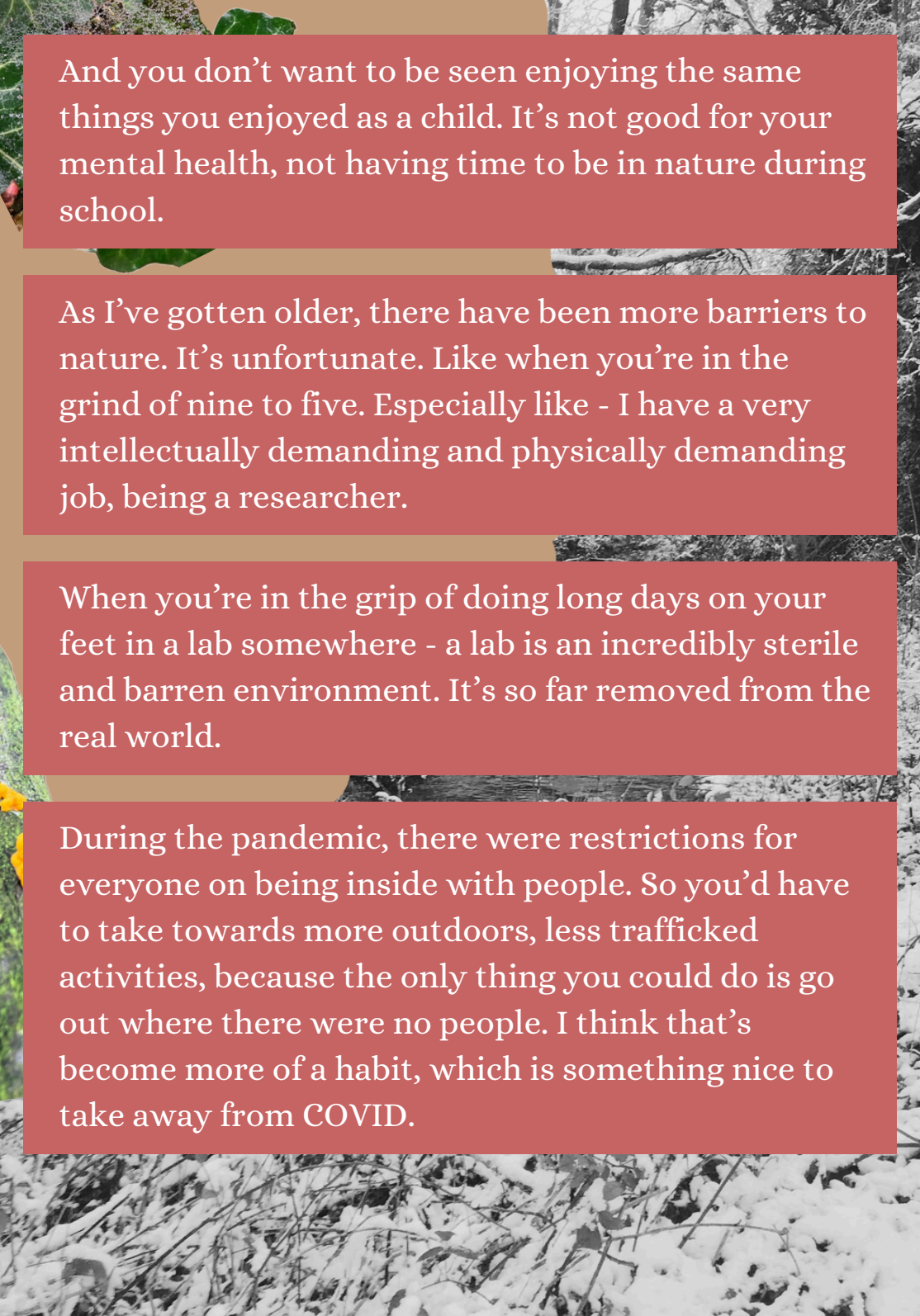
And in secondary school we didn't do any of that.

Anything natural became science. We had one field course for biology, and they would maybe throw you outside to do physical education sometimes.



As you go to secondary school, you're hitting your teenage years. You don't want to be seen or perceived.



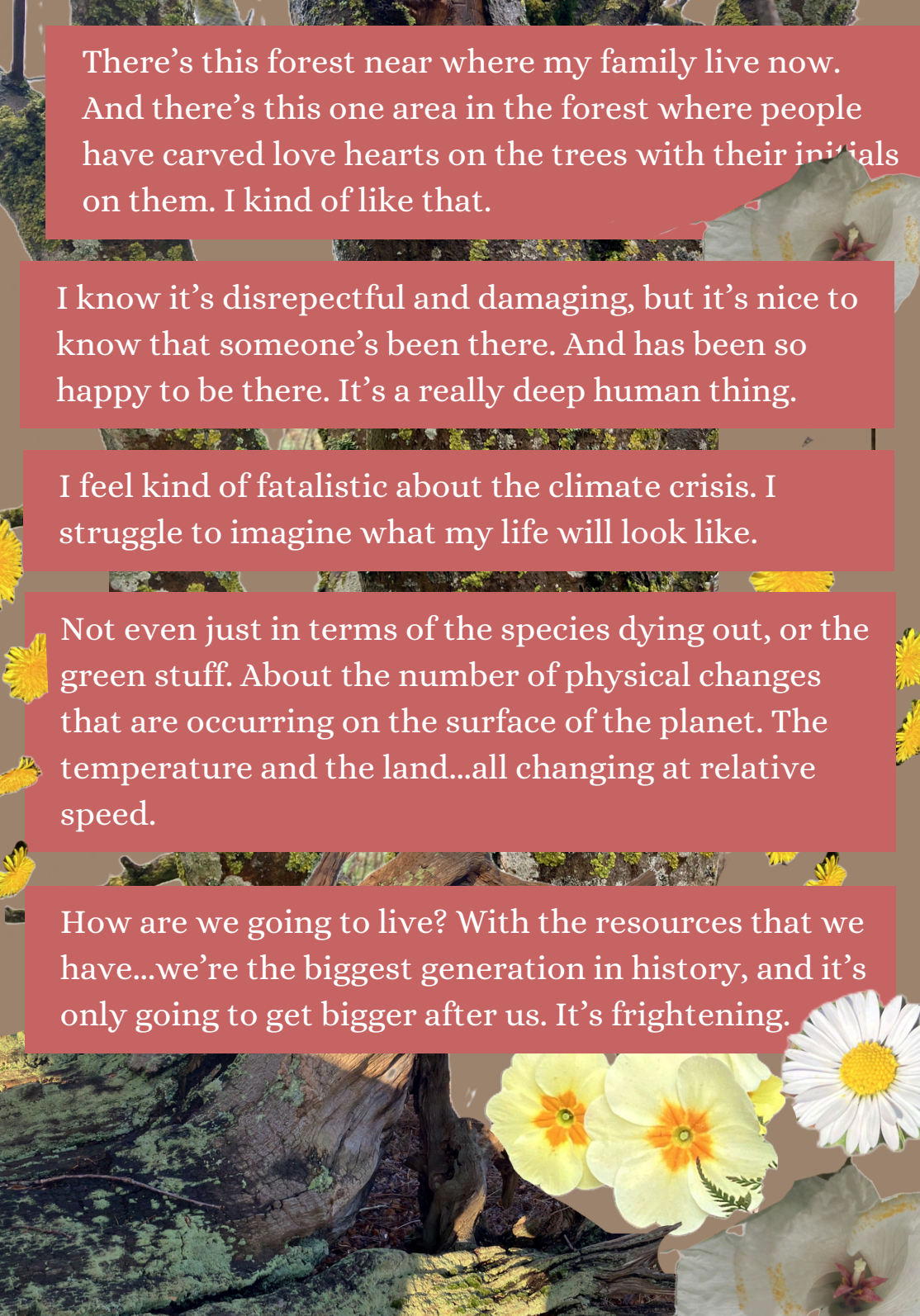


And you don't want to be seen enjoying the same things you enjoyed as a child. It's not good for your mental health, not having time to be in nature during school.

As I've gotten older, there have been more barriers to nature. It's unfortunate. Like when you're in the grind of nine to five. Especially like - I have a very intellectually demanding and physically demanding job, being a researcher.

When you're in the grip of doing long days on your feet in a lab somewhere - a lab is an incredibly sterile and barren environment. It's so far removed from the real world.

During the pandemic, there were restrictions for everyone on being inside with people. So you'd have to take towards more outdoors, less trafficked activities, because the only thing you could do is go out where there were no people. I think that's become more of a habit, which is something nice to take away from COVID.




There's this forest near where my family live now.  
And there's this one area in the forest where people  
have carved love hearts on the trees with their initials  
on them. I kind of like that.

I know it's disrespectful and damaging, but it's nice to  
know that someone's been there. And has been so  
happy to be there. It's a really deep human thing.

I feel kind of fatalistic about the climate crisis. I  
struggle to imagine what my life will look like.

Not even just in terms of the species dying out, or the  
green stuff. About the number of physical changes  
that are occurring on the surface of the planet. The  
temperature and the land...all changing at relative  
speed.

How are we going to live? With the resources that we  
have...we're the biggest generation in history, and it's  
only going to get bigger after us. It's frightening.

The background of the entire image is a lush field of wildflowers. In the foreground, there are numerous purple thistles with spiky heads. To their left, there are clusters of small pink flowers. The field extends into the distance, filled with various green plants and more yellow and pink blossoms under a bright sky.

Humans are a part of nature. And they affect what's flowing on the surface of the planet, through their actions and their needs.

It does give me hope to see the kind of research that goes on. I'm involved in science and research in the UK and I've just finished working for the UKRI. I've seen a lot of good environmental science. But on the other side of that, there's not being able to see how it will be ...

I think it needs to be more grounded in scientific reality. It needs to be more data-driven, less about party politics. It's wild enough that it's a partisan issue. It needs to be less like that. To me, there's only one perspective.





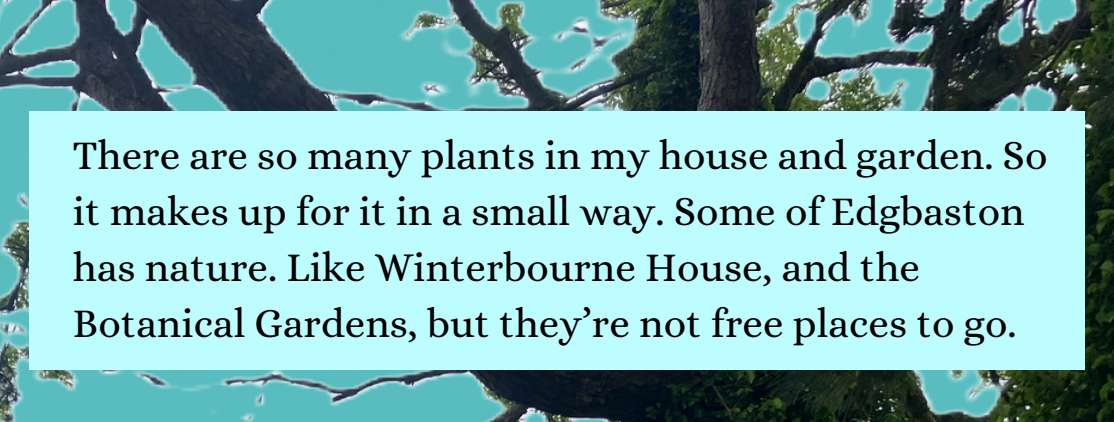
# RAHEEMA

I'm Raheema, I'm 22, I live in Edgbaston. I don't think there's a lot of nature where I live. Because there used to be a reservoir and now they're building houses there.

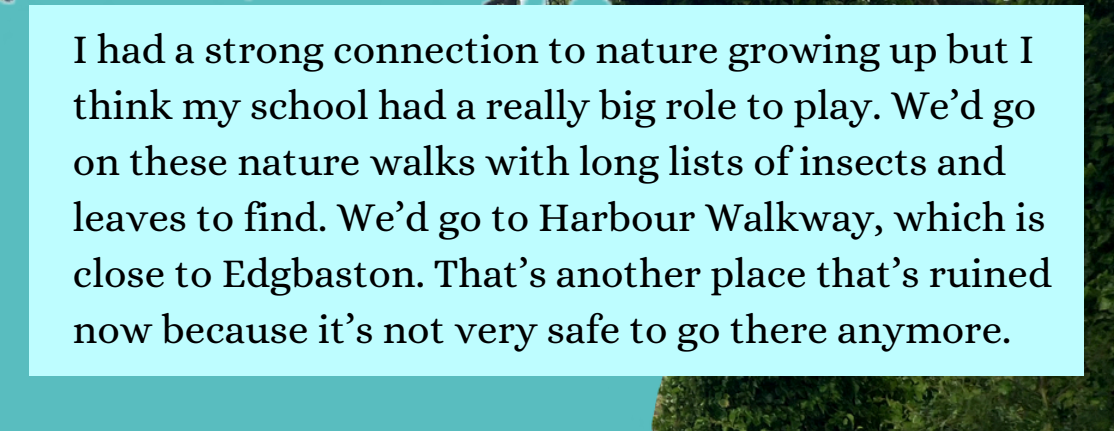
And my parks are always dead. They're quite dangerous. People just do drug deals there. I wouldn't be like "oh let's just go for a mental health walk" because it's just not safe. I would feel more anxious after.

When I want to connect with nature, I just look out of the window. My grandparents are basically hippies.

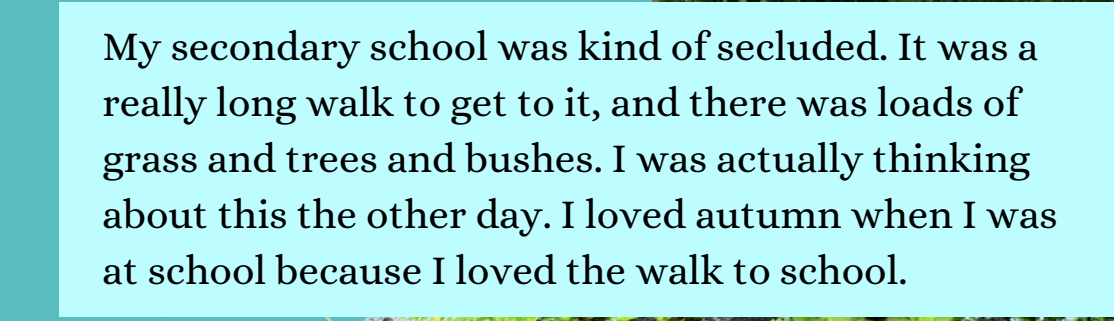




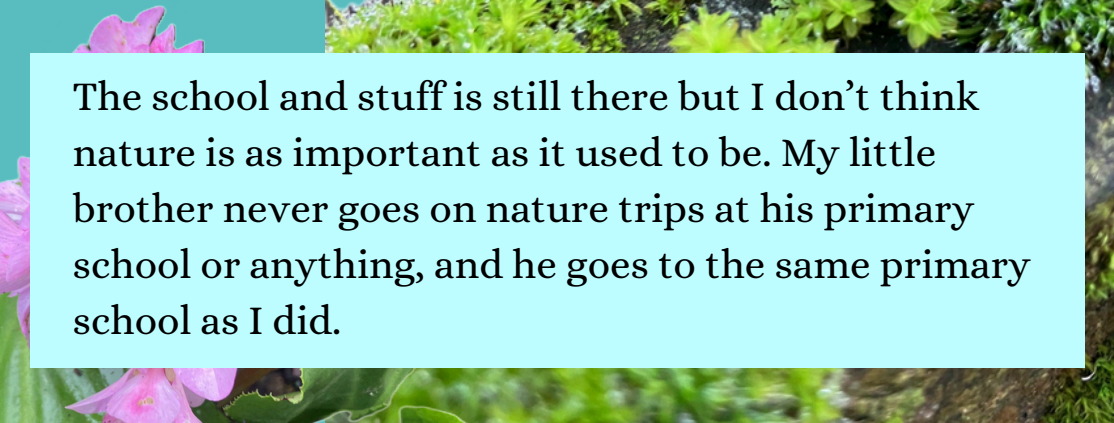
There are so many plants in my house and garden. So it makes up for it in a small way. Some of Edgbaston has nature. Like Winterbourne House, and the Botanical Gardens, but they're not free places to go.




I had a strong connection to nature growing up but I think my school had a really big role to play. We'd go on these nature walks with long lists of insects and leaves to find. We'd go to Harbour Walkway, which is close to Edgbaston. That's another place that's ruined now because it's not very safe to go there anymore.




My secondary school was kind of secluded. It was a really long walk to get to it, and there was loads of grass and trees and bushes. I was actually thinking about this the other day. I loved autumn when I was at school because I loved the walk to school.



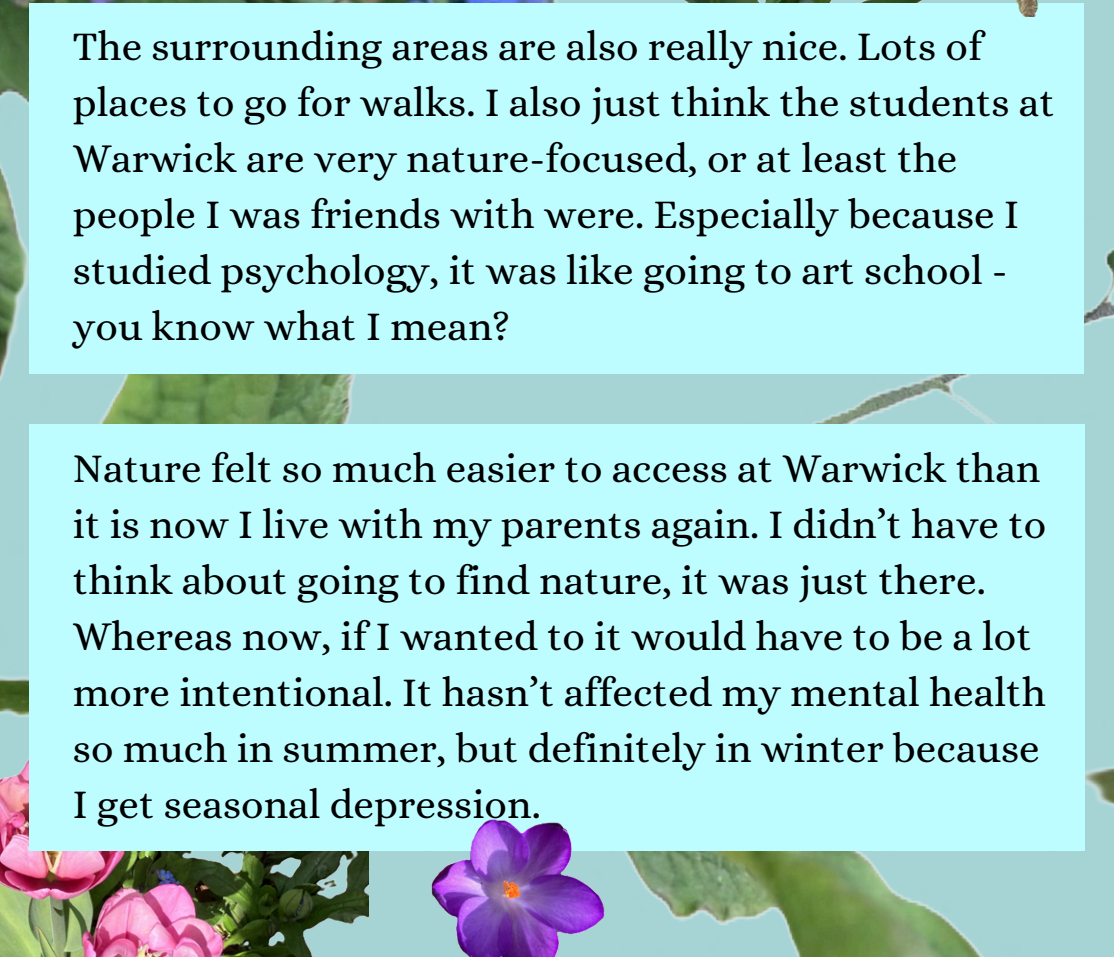

The school and stuff is still there but I don't think nature is as important as it used to be. My little brother never goes on nature trips at his primary school or anything, and he goes to the same primary school as I did.



At university, everywhere I went, I was surrounded by nature. I had to walk through it to get to class. I touched grass every day. I think Warwick campus is so pretty. Especially when it rained. The flowers and stuff would look so nice.



The surrounding areas are also really nice. Lots of places to go for walks. I also just think the students at Warwick are very nature-focused, or at least the people I was friends with were. Especially because I studied psychology, it was like going to art school - you know what I mean?



Nature felt so much easier to access at Warwick than it is now I live with my parents again. I didn't have to think about going to find nature, it was just there. Whereas now, if I wanted to it would have to be a lot more intentional. It hasn't affected my mental health so much in summer, but definitely in winter because I get seasonal depression.





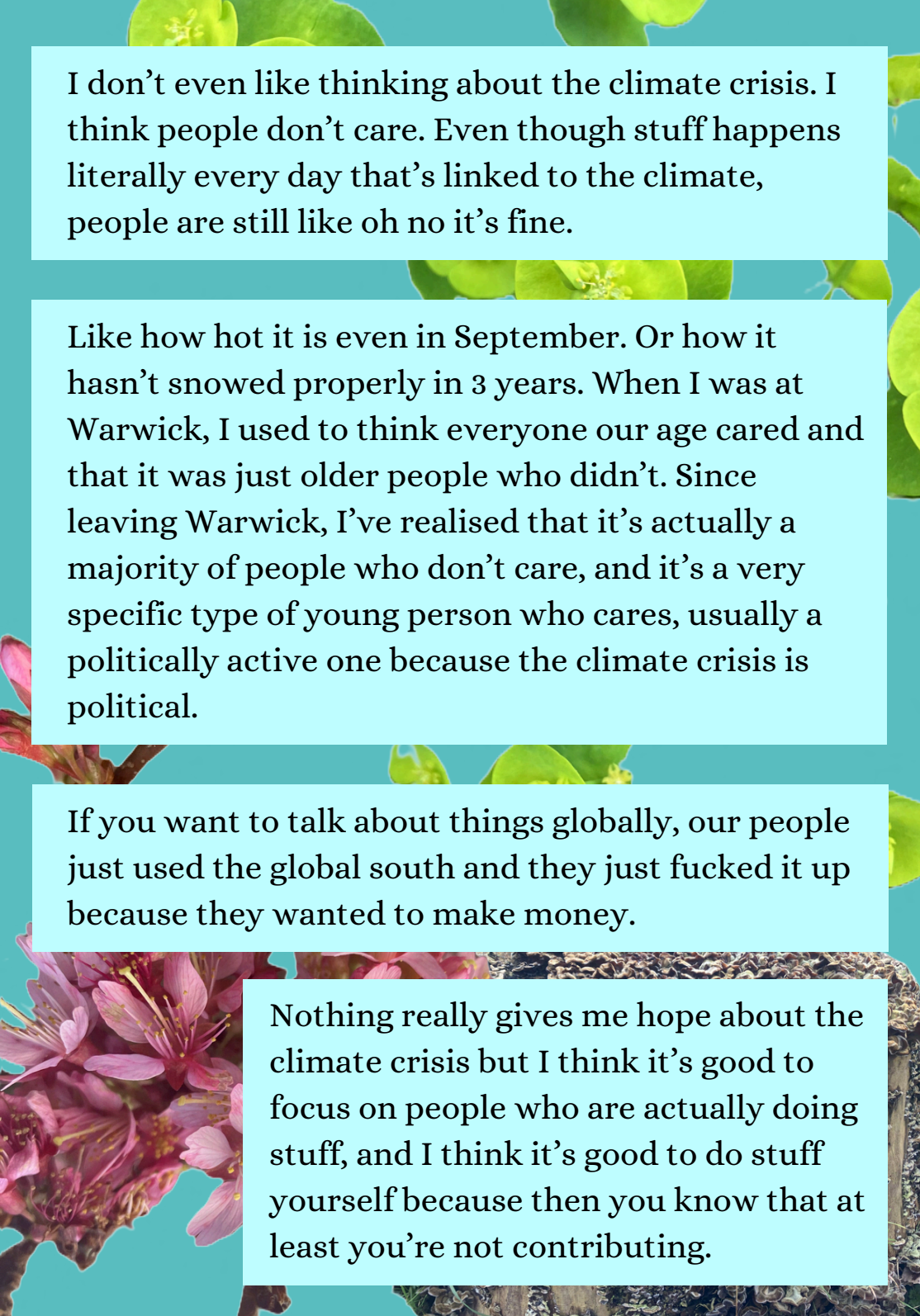
At the start of autumn, if I'm around nature and stuff and I watch nature go through autumn, it's less depressing. Autumn is my favourite season I think.



A lot of places that I used to go when I was younger, like parks, the reservoir, the walkways - they're not really safe anymore, especially as a young woman. And although when I was younger, nature used to feel like a part of life, now it feels sort of mystical. Like something I don't understand or get anymore.

I think my phone has made nature connection easier because I can just watch videos of nature instead. I can learn about nature using my phone. It's not the same as actually being in it, but you learn a lot of stuff. But I dislike how everything - I think this is basically everything now - has to look like an aesthetic, or a personality. I don't like that aspect. I guess it's also kind of been monetised. But that's also the case for everything. You can't just go for a walk, you have to be like #naturegirl.





I don't even like thinking about the climate crisis. I think people don't care. Even though stuff happens literally every day that's linked to the climate, people are still like oh no it's fine.

Like how hot it is even in September. Or how it hasn't snowed properly in 3 years. When I was at Warwick, I used to think everyone our age cared and that it was just older people who didn't. Since leaving Warwick, I've realised that it's actually a majority of people who don't care, and it's a very specific type of young person who cares, usually a politically active one because the climate crisis is political.

If you want to talk about things globally, our people just used the global south and they just fucked it up because they wanted to make money.

Nothing really gives me hope about the climate crisis but I think it's good to focus on people who are actually doing stuff, and I think it's good to do stuff yourself because then you know that at least you're not contributing.

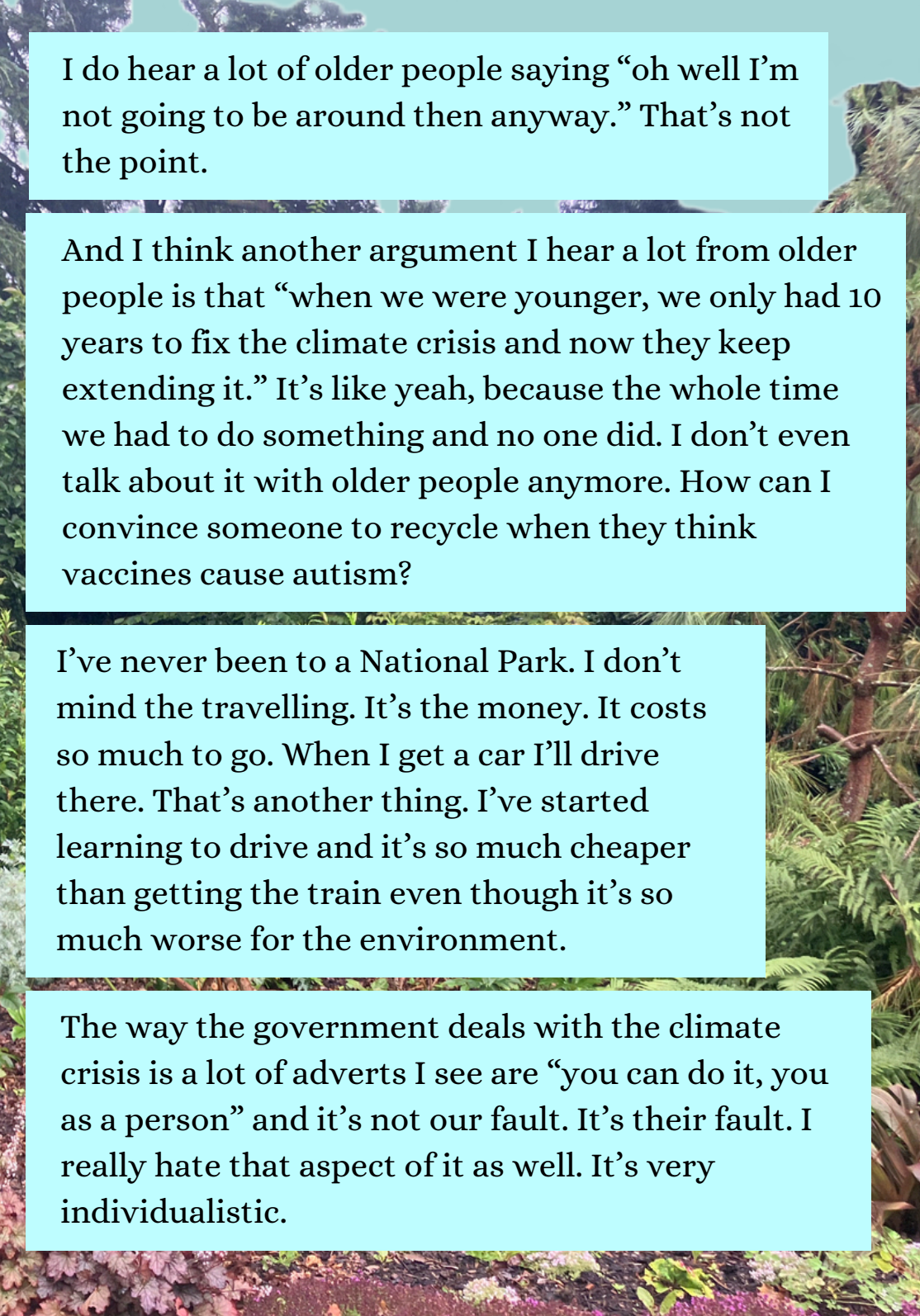
I feel like if you look online everything is so monetised. Like “you have to buy a specific brand of shampoo!” or whatever. Saving the environment doesn’t mean you have to buy certain things.

You have to do less. Consumerism is a very big part of it. Like “oh, buy this sustainable bag.” How about you just stop buying bags? I don’t like how when things are sold as sustainable they triple the price. The average person just does not care about these things.

If I went to my mum and I was like, “buy this £50 washing liquid because it’s sustainable, she’d say no.” Because we have a cost of living crisis. The whole thing is a lot deeper than the climate. It just links to everything. I don’t think the government intentionally goes “how can we fuck up the climate today” but they’re driven by money, and part of making money means not giving a shit about anything but yourself, including the environment.





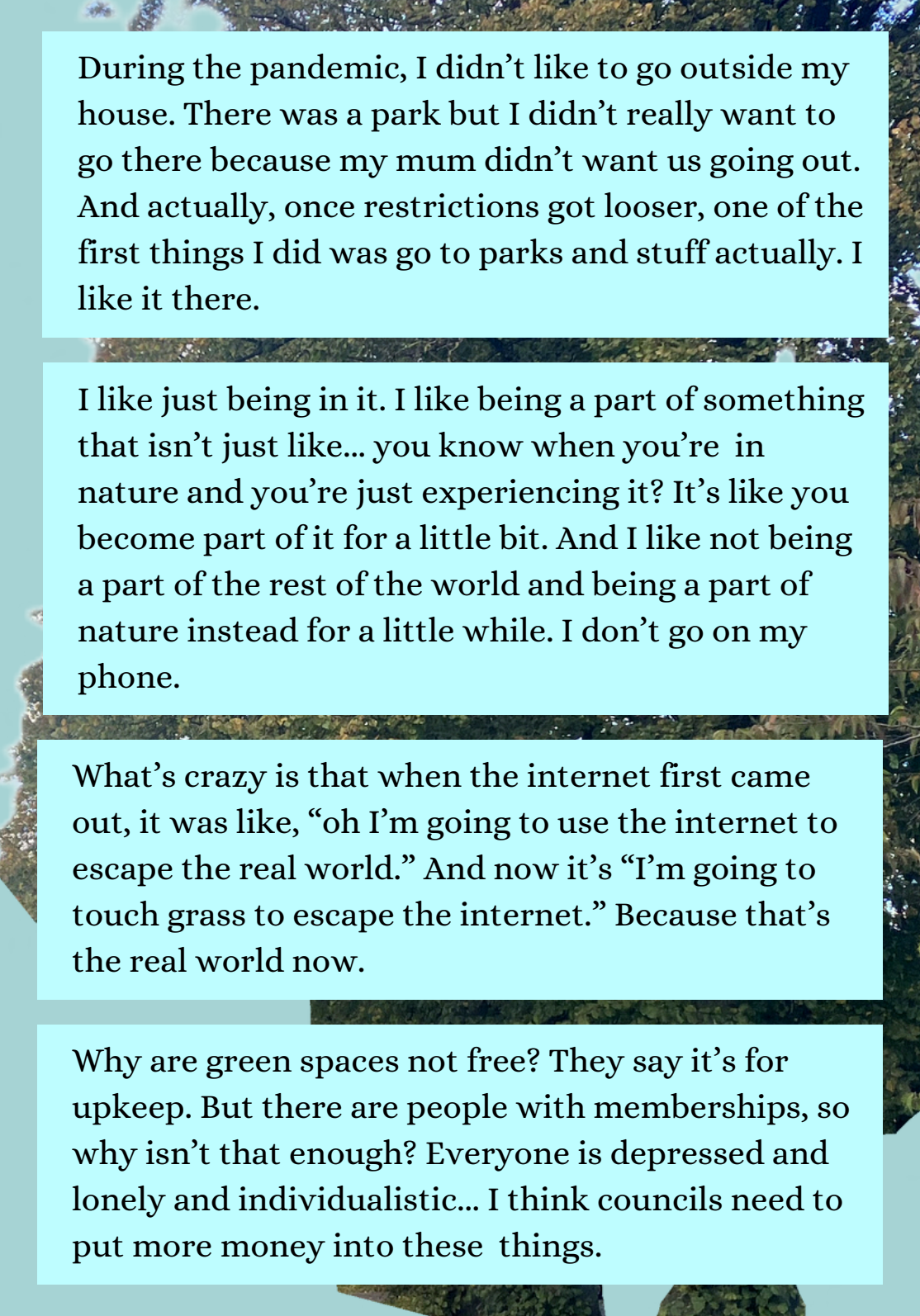


I do hear a lot of older people saying “oh well I’m not going to be around then anyway.” That’s not the point.

And I think another argument I hear a lot from older people is that “when we were younger, we only had 10 years to fix the climate crisis and now they keep extending it.” It’s like yeah, because the whole time we had to do something and no one did. I don’t even talk about it with older people anymore. How can I convince someone to recycle when they think vaccines cause autism?

I’ve never been to a National Park. I don’t mind the travelling. It’s the money. It costs so much to go. When I get a car I’ll drive there. That’s another thing. I’ve started learning to drive and it’s so much cheaper than getting the train even though it’s so much worse for the environment.

The way the government deals with the climate crisis is a lot of adverts I see are “you can do it, you as a person” and it’s not our fault. It’s their fault. I really hate that aspect of it as well. It’s very individualistic.

An aerial photograph of a dense forest with a narrow path winding through it. The trees are mostly green, with some brown patches indicating autumn or dead trees. The path is a light brown color, contrasting with the darker green of the forest floor.

During the pandemic, I didn't like to go outside my house. There was a park but I didn't really want to go there because my mum didn't want us going out. And actually, once restrictions got looser, one of the first things I did was go to parks and stuff actually. I like it there.

I like just being in it. I like being a part of something that isn't just like... you know when you're in nature and you're just experiencing it? It's like you become part of it for a little bit. And I like not being a part of the rest of the world and being a part of nature instead for a little while. I don't go on my phone.

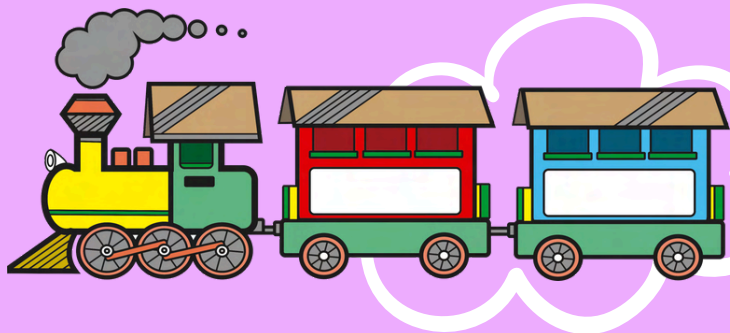
What's crazy is that when the internet first came out, it was like, "oh I'm going to use the internet to escape the real world." And now it's "I'm going to touch grass to escape the internet." Because that's the real world now.

Why are green spaces not free? They say it's for upkeep. But there are people with memberships, so why isn't that enough? Everyone is depressed and lonely and individualistic... I think councils need to put more money into these things.

All of these conversations with young people leave me

# DREAMING...

Of national parks which are free and accessible by public transport

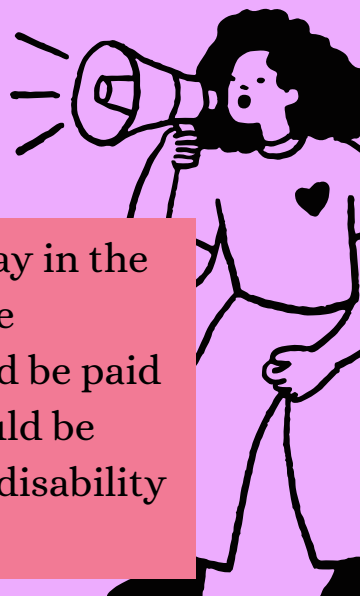


And are well-treated and safe from pollution.

It would be normal for schools and universities to take trips to them, because nature would be a valued part of the curriculum.

And all young people would get the opportunity to enjoy it.

Young people would have an active say in the future of national parks, including the designation of new ones. There would be paid work in their stewardship, and it would be equally accessible regardless of race, disability or class.







# ME (AGAIN)

In September 2024, I went to the Peak District along with my boyfriend Oscar, using part of the funding for this zine.

It feels funny to have gone back to a National Park, this time in a relationship that is healthy and kind, where I am nurtured and flourishing rather than sad and lonely.



Oscar and I, in Buxton Country Park.



me in a chocolate shop in Buxton

I think back on my time in Dale and I believe what I found most comforting about the experience is how infinite the world seemed there, how miniscule it made my problems.

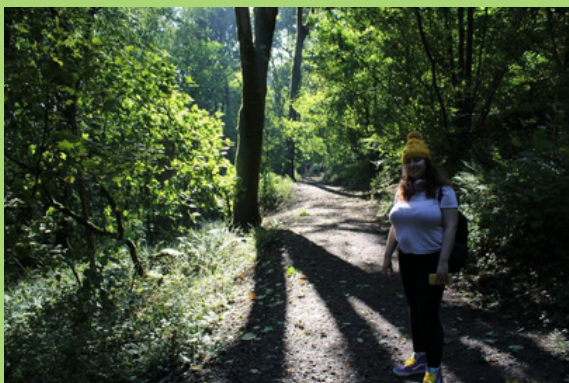




Me in Mam Tor

I know now that I am loved, not just by Oscar but by the world around me.

There is love in the way the bees hum through the spring, the greeting of a stranger on a trail path.



Me in Buxton Country Park



Me at the top of Mam Tor (tired!)

The young people I talked to spoke of nature with such joy. What would this country look like if we decided to put this love at the heart of policy and practice?

Thank you to Campaign for National Parks for funding this zine, to Ewurajoa, Luke, Raheema and Kalli for being such lovely and active participants. Thank you to Oscar for coming with me to the Peak District and taking photos, and for just generally being you.



And thank you to **you**, whoever you are, for reading this zine! Here is a picture of my cat Trixie, as thanks. She contributed nothing to the zine, but I think she's cute.



For more of green bean zines, follow @greenbeanzines on instagram!



